Interview with Mr. Henry Loomis , 2011

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HENRY LOOMIS: DIRECTOR OF VOICE OF AMERICA

Loomis' Road To VOA Director

Q: How did you get to be named VOA Director?

LOOMIS: I was assigned to be one of the two CIA staff members to the President's Committee on International Information Activities — called the Jackson Committee. Abbott Washburn was the deputy director. I went there for an entirely different subject for CIA, and when the committee made the policy decision that they didn't want to get involved in that issue, I said, “Fine, I'll go back to the CIA,” but they said, “Wait a minute. There's a thing called IIA,” and I said, “What in the world is that?” and they said, “It's the propaganda part of the State Department, and we have to look at that. The two people from the State Department aren't much help because one is a policy planner and one is a Soviet expert, and not from IIA. So I was assigned to that full-time for the next six months, with free access to all papers and all individuals in and out of government — and had the awful experience of watching the Voice disintegrate under McCarthy. I also had to work with the

Fulbright Committee, particularly Carl Marcy, who was the staff director. So I ended up by writing the first draft of the chapter of their report dealing with broadcasting, the Voice of America. That draft was pretty well accepted; there were no substantive changes. So at the end of that I went back to CIA.

Shortly thereafter, I got a call from Ted Streibert, who had just been appointed the director (of USIA). He asked me to come see him, and I went, assuming he'd ask me about my views of that chapter, and so forth and so on. Instead of that, he said he had read the chapter and was in complete agreement, and would I come as his special assistant to help do it. When I had finished with the Jackson Committee I would have given you a thousand to one I would never have anything to do with IIA, but I had some views that I thought were correct, and this was certainly an opportunity, so I agreed to do it and went on a leave of absence from CIA. I think it was September of '53. Abbott Washburn probably had something to do with that, because he was deputy director (of USIA) and he had been staff director of the Jackson Committee, and we worked very closely together during that period. So I was his special assistant for four or five, maybe six months.

The Early Problems At USIA:

To give you an idea of what the situation was, at one point the question was, “How are we going to broadcast to some country?” and I said, “Well, let me take a look at the NIE, the National Intelligence Estimate, and get an idea.” So I asked my secretary to get the NIE or other NSC papers, and she said, “Oh, we don't have any NSC papers in the Agency.” I said, “What?!” “That's right; no NSC papers at all.” Luckily, Bobby Cutler, who was there at the NSC as assistant to the President, had also been on the Jackson Committee, and also I had known him at MIT when I worked there as assistant to the president. So I called Bobby and said, “What the hell goes here? How can you possibly expect the Information Agency to know what your policy is if it can't get the papers?” He said, “Oh, they're a bunch of commies, you can't trust them.” I said, “The hell they are, and if they are, go ahead and fire them but at least put somebody in there that will do it.

And besides, they're not commies." So we then had an arrangement where the papers were sent to me personally, not to the Agency. So I had to have a whole special safe and a special secretary, and people had to come there to read them. That lasted for three or four months, before I got it turned over to Policy, where it belonged.

It soon became evident that the Information Agency had no information about what the competition was doing. We didn't know how books were distributed; we didn't know how movies suddenly popped up; we didn't know who was broadcasting how much to where. And there was no intelligence organization in the government that gave a damn, because they were all specialized. I suggested to Streibert that we establish our own office of intelligence and research. We didn't mean covert; just finding out what information you could find, which could be reported from the field, and organizing it. FBIS listened to foreign broadcasts, but that was for the policy part, political information that went to the appropriate parts of the government, the military. But how was that broadcast made? How was the information gotten out? What radio was subservient to whom? And which newspaper in the Middle East had been bought by whom recently — and you can tell that from the content — and how did the books get to Montevideo by the ton? Where did they go from there?

That office [USIA Office of Intelligence and Research] was set up in '54 and I became the director of that. I knew Streibert and I knew Washburn and I knew George Allen, because he had come in at that point, while I was still director of research.

Loomis Goes To White House: 1957

When the Sputnik was launched in '57, Jim Killian, the president of MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), was picked by Eisenhower to be his special assistant for science, a new position. So the day he was given that assignment he called me up, because I had been one of his assistants at MIT, and asked me to come with him to the White House. And I said, "Oh, Jim, I'm very happy here" — at that point we were really getting it going,

the first public opinion surveys in Europe, that sort of stuff, pretty exciting stuff — I'll obviously do what I'm ordered to do, but you'd better check with George Allen, and I'll do whatever you two decide. Allen and Killian had been classmates at North Carolina, and Allen wouldn't let me go. So Killian went to Bobby Cutler, and Bobby Cutler said I was going, and that afternoon I went. It was that fast. A year later, we'd finally got our little grapefruit in the air and things were settled down, and so George Allen asked me to come back and be director of the Voice.

1958: Return To USIA As Director of VOA

Q: What did you do to put your stamp on the Voice, when you took over?

LOOMIS: (At the time I took over) Barry Zorthian was running the Voice. He was efficient, and smart, worked hard, and was very ambitious, and he was running it. If he hadn't been, nothing would have happened, the thing was such a total mess. It was so torn apart by the pro-McCarthy and anti-McCarthy (forces). It had been off by itself up in New York; no one in Washington knew what it was doing. There was the antipathy of “them” and “us”. “They're” all a bunch of mad people, all Broadway types, uncontrollable. And engineering had never had any priority since the Ring Plan had been blown up by McCarthy; they were just being quiet, sitting down there saying nothing to nobody. The engineering was in total collapse; the signal was lousy.

Everything was such a mess. I felt several things had to happen, and happen quickly. We had to put major emphasis on engineering, and get new transmitters around the world. I think that the main thing was that none of the previous directors in recent times had really cared, had really worked at the job, and none of them seemed particularly interested in all the aspects of it. To me the fascination of the Voice was that it had so many different aspects. Half the problem was engineering. Half the problem was content, however you want to describe that — part of that is political, part of that is journalistic, part of that is knowing your audience, the cross-cultural — it's all that mix. There's no point

in spending all your time at either one; you have to do both. I tried to do both. I think the Voice was sufficiently sort of running on momentum, so that all you had to do was make a few suggestions and people got excited.

The one thing I wanted to do, and I think I succeeded rather rapidly, was have people know that I cared. One of the advantages of living out here (on a farm near Middleburg) was that I had two hours in the car. I felt I had to listen to the programs. I knew of no way to skim a program. You can skim something in writing, particularly if you're a fast reader, but you can't run the tape twice as fast or listen for a minute and then listen for another minute. You have to listen to it, and that takes one hell of a lot of time. You couldn't do it in the office, and you didn't want to spend your whole evening doing it, and the commute in the car was a perfect time. So I got the big VOA tape recorder in my car, and I would listen to an English tape and then a language tape. Now, the language tapes, in most of the languages I couldn't understand them, and some of them, like Chinese, I couldn't understand at all. You can usually understand at least the proper names, the geographic and personal names, but in Chinese I couldn't even do that. But I'd have a content sheet so I would have some idea what was meant to be going on. I knew that no one had ever listened to the Albanian Service, and it worked like magic when I wrote a note saying it was great, and the second female voice was a little better; it didn't matter what I said, but I had to prove I had listened to it. And I just did that alphabetically, and I rotated the programs in English, too.

I was used to running shops, and I wanted to make it clear that I was not going to be an inactive guy, and that Zorthian and Ed Martin weren't going to be running their own bailiwicks. In fact, I had more problems with Martin than I did with Zorthian.

Q: Did you find it necessary to check back constantly with “uptown,” or were you allowed to run the shop yourself?

LOOMIS: There's no one answer to that. It zigzagged, depending on the President, the Director, the head of Policy, sometimes the Area Directors, sometimes an ambassador. By and large, I didn't have to check very much. By and large, it was fine. With Murrow, he had problems, because I usually felt — I think correctly — that he understood my position and sympathized with it. But he had pressures on him, particularly because of Sorensen's relationship, and Don Wilson's relationship with the White House. When something was really important I'd take it to him and he and Sorensen would thrash it out. I won some and Sorensen won some, and that just got worse; it got impossible under Johnson, but that was Johnson, and Rowan. That's why I resigned — because of a direct order not to carry (the story) that our planes had been over Cambodia, when everybody knew they had. It was being broadcast by all the foreign services. So that was the end.

Q: You said you felt you had to give a lot of attention to the engineering side, in building up the transmitters around the world.

LOOMIS: One thing I found was that no director in the recent past had been to all the transmitters overseas. Some of them never got to any of them. So I started right out. I went to every one, and I kept going to every one. I learned a good deal of technical things, because my technical base was physics and electronics and radar. But I had not had high-power HF, but it's not that hard, not that different, so I was able to pick up what the thrust was, and what the basic problems were. One of the first things you had to do was let them know you knew what an ohm was and what a watt was. Again, that went fairly quickly. The equipment was older and in worse shape than I had expected. The staff was less innovative than I had hoped they would be. Some of them were very competent in keeping going what they were doing but they weren't looking for a better way of doing it. A lot of those places were pretty tough living, and you had to teach the kids in the family, where there were no schools, with correspondence courses. And in the Philippines you were having people shot at; a couple of Americans were held at gunpoint at the receiving station. And that's no fun. It was clear that engineering was a major thing, and I think I had

to do more to get that to par than I did in programming because programming was further advanced — it wasn't right, but it was further advanced than engineering. Engineering was that way because no one had dared ask for a cent. I did a great deal of study of the transmitters, and it was perfectly obvious what the problem was; it was just a question of what do you do about it.

Q: So what were the major changes you were able to make in engineering during your seven years as VOA director?

LOOMIS: The first thing that had to be done was to get something built on the East Coast to get our signals across to Tangier and Europe. Munich didn't have anything to broadcast, which made it more difficult to bring the Munich (Radio Center) back (to Washington). So I had the plans all made, and I knew what I wanted, and I had discussed it with Abbott Washburn and he recognized that. But the budget cycle was such that the budget had already been put together, and God knows, you're talking about ten million dollars! You realize what that means, etcetera. This was '58, still. I happened to be on the Courier, the ship transmitter at Rhodes, at the time of the Lebanese landings, and I got back to Washington very quickly. We had started English (around the clock) right away. I think Allen and I thought of it simultaneously. I started it at that end, but I would have started it here. I talked to Abbott, and said maybe we can get Eisenhower to put in a special appropriation request, a supplemental. So he did, and we got the first part of what is now Greenville because of the Lebanese landings. That's how that whole ball started.

We got a de facto commitment from Rooney that we could talk in the order of one every year, or two transmitter stations, depending on the politics of the situation at the time. Rooney didn't want to be snowed. He wanted to feel that you knew what you were doing. And he would test you. I found that you had to know details, because he would take, in a more or less arbitrary way, a detail and go back, back, back to see how far you could go. And whatever you did, if you didn't know, say you didn't know. I needed to know the details anyway. So when I went over the budget before I went up there, I was trying to think like

Rooney. You had lists of things you needed, so many microphones and so on, and then you had “Other.” Not significant money, but I decided to find out what it meant. I remember once it amounted to a hundred and some stopwatches. I said, “Why on God's earth do we need so many stopwatches?”! Nobody knew why, but of course they had just put a figure in and when I asked they just panicked and said “stopwatches.” So the thing to do was to reduce “Other.” Then I got Carl Malmi in budget, who was very good at doing that sort of stuff.

So Rooney was very good, and he and I developed, I believe, a very workable (relationship). I respected him, and he respected me. I can give you two examples of that. One, I was sitting opposite him behind those big books. I had my second-level back-up and my third-level back-up books, so I was reading from the third-level back-up book, and he said, “Let me see it,” and I said, “Yes sir,” and picked it up to hand it to him. What I'd forgotten was that the back of my big book was leaning against the water carafe, so that when I did that the water carafe went over on Rooney. He said, “I knew you had a lot of water in that budget!”

On a substantive matter, he gave us a signal that he was very unhappy with a program in Polish about church-state relationships in the United States. You've got to remember that he was Lace Curtain Irish; he was very Catholic, and very conservative Catholic. That program, I found out, had been written by a Philadelphia monsignor of Polish background and impeccable Catholic credentials. Now, luckily, Alex Klieforth was Program Manager. Alex is a very devout Catholic, and he is also a religious scholar of no mean accomplishment. We read the programs — they were a series of twelve or so - and it was a description of the separation of church and state in the United States. It was clear that the object of the game was to show (by implication) that Cardinal Wyszynski should be separate from the Polish government. There was no question that the purpose of the program was to enhance Cardinal Wyszynski's position in the conflict that was going on between church and state in Poland at that time. The monsignor felt that was true, and Alex felt that was true, and we checked with some other Catholic source. So, when the

appropriate time came, Rooney took off, about how this was perfectly terrible and so forth. I said, “We believe that it was a significant program, that it was the right thing, that it was describing the United States and showing the advantages of the separation of church and state, and that we felt it was helping Cardinal Wyszynski.” He blew his top, and said it was harmful to Wyszynski, and got absolutely crimson in his face. We had arranged that when it got into theology, Alex would handle it; I'm not Catholic, and I'm not a religious scholar. So Alex, with his calm, collected approach, refused to be goaded by Rooney — who was not playacting but genuinely and deeply disturbed. I thought, there goes the last penny, but it's right and we're going to stick to it, and we did. It seemed to last forever, but I suppose it lasted five minutes. Then it stopped as quickly as it began. He said, “Okay, go on.” Item so and so. And we got every penny. But he was that kind of a guy. We showed him that it wasn't a casual thing, and not a thing done because we didn't know what was going on, that it was carefully thought out. The way he found out about it, I'm sure, was that there were differences within the Polish desk — as there always are on any desk, including the English. I give you that story just as an example of the relationship I think we developed with him. And he was very proud, near the end, saying he had given the Voice everything it wanted — which sometimes annoyed some of the rest of the Agency. I think the Senate approach (dropping the language specifically supporting everything for the Voice) was the wise one, because some years the Voice is popular and gets its money and other years cultural centers are popular. It's good to have a back-and-forth.

Q: Tell me about some of the major changes in VOA's transmitting capabilities during your seven years at the helm.

LOOMIS: We just about got our transmitter a year (that Rooney had agreed to), though they were still being built when I left. We just about doubled the power. We got a lot of new transmitters. We had a new station in England. We had an entirely new station in northern Greece. We had a whole new station in the Philippines. And of course we had Greenville, and we had Monrovia as entirely new stations that hadn't existed. We upgraded, to some degree, some of the other stations, but not as much as I had wished to. One hundred KW

transmitters had been our biggest before — except for four 250's mothballed since the Ring Plan, which are now in Greenville, and 250 was our standard. Now they're going to 500 as standard, which is fine.

Another change I'd like to mention: when I came, and I guess from the beginning, the number of hours of a language service were determined by domestic U.S. politics. Not by the ability to reach the country, or the amount of time that would make sense to the country, or the political importance of the country, or the number of transmitters you could put on it. If you're broadcasting into a jammed area, you need a minimum of six transmitters to be heard. Well, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, for example, had something like three hours — a lot of it repeats, with one or two transmitters, which made no sense. But on a table it looked nice. So we cut out a lot of those repeats and gave them more transmitters at the time they were on. And there was all hell to pay. Congress was bombarded with all kinds of letters, saying we didn't understand the situation in those countries. Those three just come to hand, but it was the same thing with almost any of the foreign languages. And we instituted a system in which you had to have, in a jammed language, six transmitters; otherwise you wouldn't do it. And when we ran out of transmitters, then we had to go on priorities. We started this (language priority) system at the Voice, but when I became Deputy Director (of the Agency) we broadened it to include all activities in seven or eight categories. When you put something up from category four to category three, you had to take something out of three and put it lower.

Q: What was the first major policy issue or event that confronted you?

LOOMIS: I guess the Lebanese landing, although it wasn't really a policy issue. There were really only three: that one, the Bay of Pigs, and the Cuban confrontation.

Q: Two of those relate to Latin America. But the government's Spanish and Portuguese broadcasts were carried by Walter Lemmon's WRUL rather than the Voice of America. What was the reason for that?

LOOMIS: That's a long and bloody history. There was no damn reason for WRUL after World War Two, except that Senator Johnson supported it. Senator Saltonstall had been bamboozled into supporting it, with the Massachusetts connection, but when I went to him and told him what the facts were he said, “Oh my God no, of course not”. Leonard Marks (who, a decade later, became Director of USIA) was Johnson's lawyer and also WRUL's lawyer, and who paid whom how much for what I am not certain, but somebody must have been paid, because what we were paying WRUL made absolutely no sense. So I started to stop the contract. I got the House to cut it out; Rooney was very much for it. Then the Senate started on it, and Saltonstall started to talk, and I went up to him and showed him the information we had, the expenses, and that something was very wrong with this. And Leonard Marks of course was furious at me, and we had all kinds of discussions and arguments about it, with him trying to dissuade me. Eventually we (Johnson and I) had a really stormy head-to-head on this in the beginning of a hearing and I went to see Jenkins, who was Johnson's special assistant, who brought in some big political names, and we had a really stormy session, where I basically said, “There's dishonesty here, and my concern is that government money not be spent in this way because it's wrong.” I think it was Clive DuVal, the Agency General Counsel, who was with me. The upshot was, it was agreed that I was young and naive and didn't understand the world. That was fine, Secondly, that the budget for WRUL would be cut in half that year and that that would be the last year. I said, “Fine, I'll buy that, sure.” And that was that. But Mr. Johnson never forgot. And Mr. Jenkins never forgot. Of course, he had to leave anyhow. But we did have Spanish.

Now, the Bay of Pigs: I was driving in in my car — and I always listened to the CBS 8 o'clock news — and heard about the Bay of Pigs, and thought Jesus Christ!, and turned off the radio and began thinking of what we had to do. Obviously, we have to go on in Spanish 24 hours a day, and we've got to find out what's going on, and so forth. I'd better check with Murrow to make sure he'd understand and agree. So I called Murrow, and he didn't know either, and he was furious and I was furious and he agreed, “Go ahead

and do what you want to do." Then, very shortly we realized that we had a real problem, because there were three sets of broadcasters from the United States into Cuba, all saying different things: you had CIA's Swan Island, which was broadcasting that every thing is going great, they're landing, you'd better jump on our side of the fence quick. Then you had the #migr#s broadcasting from the medium wave transmitters in Key West and Miami. And then you had the Voice. So how could any Cuban know what the hell was going on as far as the U.S. was concerned? There was absolute pandemonium. The whole concept of being able to talk to the Cubans had clearly never been considered by the President or anybody. They had a tool there they just didn't use. Not that it necessarily could have made a difference, but you wouldn't have looked like such an ass. I think it hurt the U.S. because even if physical things had been the same, if you had handled it honestly like Britain did with Dunkirk you'd have been better off than trying to handle it the way we did. And it was almost impossible to find out what was physically going on. So that was an absolute disaster.

In comparison, the Cuban confrontation was the best operation I think I've ever been involved in, as far as coordination was concerned. Murrow was ill. Don Wilson was running the agency. He, of course, was a close friend of the Kennedys. Bobby told him about the issue on Wednesday, I believe, maybe Tuesday, and I've heard it said that the President, when he found out about it, was furious that Bobby had told Wilson, but anyway he had. The day after Don knew about it he called me and told me he wanted to see me right away. He and I and Sorensen were there, and he said what the problem was, and that we were going to have to do something as far as Cuba was concerned. He didn't know what, but this was clearly more than a Cuban problem. We had to worry about the rest of the world, but we also had to worry about the Cubans recognizing that the missiles really were there. So the question was how to get a signal in. We had been concerned about our signal in Cuba for some time, and we had arranged, about three or four months earlier, through some friends, to have a U.S. destroyer go around Cuba and get signal measurements of U.S. medium-wave stations, and you found that your clear-

channel stations like the one from St. Louis and the one from New Orleans came in like a ton of bricks in Havana and in eastern Cuba. I was also well aware of the problem of the medium-wave stations in Key West and Miami. They got in some, not very well but some. Our new experimental transportable 50 kilowatt medium-wave transmitter was almost finished at Collins radio in Texas. We ordered it to start rolling right away. We had already figured out where we might want to put it, on Marathon Key. I suggested that we take over the programming of Swan Island, so that the CIA did not program that, to avoid the confusion during the Bay of Pigs. Then we discussed taking over eleven private commercial stations, of which WRUL was still one; it was still kicking around and trying to do things. That raised problems, as to how to do that. It was against the law, but we talked to the FCC about it. We figured if we asked them nicely they'd probably go along. We didn't know for how long, since we didn't know what was going to happen. We might be at war with the Russians, in which case who gave a damn. Well, how do you do this, because you don't want the stations to know it's going to happen till the President's talk, and you don't have much time after the President talks.

In those days you had a telephone monopoly. So we had a small talk with AT&T and on Sunday morning — the President was going to speak on Sunday afternoon some AT&T guys came into these control rooms just to check, having heard there was a little problem with the equipment, and they were just there for 15 or 20 minutes. That was that; they left. The CIA was going to take their feed from Greenville.

Then, we got a draft of the speech, and we had the Russians and the Spanish and others locked in a room to translate the text. That was in the afternoon. It must have been a Monday. So Monday about ten we decided now's the time to get hold of Newt Minow, who was in New York to give a speech. He got a call from Salinger saying please come to the White House immediately. (I was already there.) About two or three o'clock Minow and Salinger and I were in the White House. By this time we had found out the name of the owner of the station, and through a variety of subterfuges we had found out where the owner physically was. By this time it was in the press that the President was going to do

something. It was important that the owner would be able to be reached at 6 o'clock — the President went on at 7. We had eleven to do, so we started at 6 and called the first one. “This is Pierre Salinger. The President is going to make a very important talk; it's going to be of world-shaking importance. He has asked me to ask you for your help and assistance in this matter. Will you help?” And the guy said, “Yes, what do you want me to do?” “My friend Newt Minow is right here and he'll talk to you some more.” So Newt would get on the phone and say, “Hi, George. It's important that the President's speech be carried, which I'm sure you were going to do anyway. But it's important that it be carried to Cuba and to the rest of the world in all these different languages. What we'd like to do would be to borrow your station and have you carry the Voice of America program.” He emphasized the public service and national security aspects of the request. And the guy would say, “Yes, but I don't know how to do that.” “Let me turn you over to Henry Loomis, the director of the Voice. He'll tell you how to do what you have to do.” I told him, “There's a new jack in the upper left hand corner of your master control. All you have to do is plug into that, and that's it.” “How long?” I told him I didn't know how long this would be but it would certainly be that night and probably the next day, at least. I would call him tomorrow and we'd discuss it. The guy was still in shock, seeing he had no choice, so that was that. We did the last one with about five minutes to go. We had them all, and it worked fine.

Then the next day, there was no way we could stop right in the middle of it, of course; the next five days you had it. So I had a daily call to all eleven, and I'd say, “We clearly have to have it now, and it's still 24 hours a day, but I'll do what I can, and I'll call you tomorrow.” Leonard Reinsch was excellent, of course, he was in Atlanta, he had that big station, and, “If you have any questions, call Leonard; he feels very strongly and he knows exactly what's going on, and you know this is the possibility of World War Three, and we've got to do everything we possibly can. We really appreciate your patriotism and self-sacrifice.”

We kept them on 24 hours for something like a week. Beginning about the second day, they began to ask, “How much am I going to be paid for this?” Or some of them did. And I said, “I haven't a glimmer; we don't know how long it's going to be; we'll just have to do

what is right at the end of it, and I'm sure that we will all agree on what is right. At this point, I just don't know, but please support us another day."

Then, a little later, we were able to back off from non-prime time on small stations, and gradually go back, and a poor station manager was terribly worried, with the big football game that they'd normally carry, and so we agreed that they could drop out for three hours and carry the football game. It lasted thirty-three days before the last one was let go. They got a little more insistent near the end about who was going to pay whom how much. So we had some discussions while it was still going on. The amount of time and the number of stations was being cut back all the time — the weaker stations, the less important stations. So we had some discussions, and the question was, did we pay them what their rate card called for, or pay them for the portion of their rate card they had sold but had to cancel, or that we pay them for their out-of-pocket expenses — staff and power and so forth. People had different views. It was very difficult to figure out what was right. So, let's come and have a meeting in Washington, have all of you come up here and we'll discuss it with Ed Murrow, who was back then. And Murrow and I gave a very nice lunch for the group at the Metropolitan Club, in a private dining room, and Ed Murrow was eloquent as always. Then we had a meeting in the Rose Garden with President Kennedy. They had tape of each one of them shaking hands with the President and the President saying something to him personally about what a great guy he was. I was delegated to work with them as to what the money would be. We had two or three who were very helpful. They suggested in the meeting that this was really a patriotic thing and that there was really no way of charging. Some reluctantly, but eventually all agreed that that was that. So the cost of it was our lunch at the Metropolitan Club. (Some of this, particularly in the Miami stations, was to avoid having a variety of voices saying different things.)

Q: You were a believer in the importance of English broadcasting in the VOA mix of language broadcasts?

LOOMIS: I felt very strongly — I think part of this was from my experience in the research area — that English was the international language, particularly among those who were politically curious, not all by a long shot but more than any other language. With our transmitters so weak, and with the vagaries of the way things come down in hops and skips, that if you broadcast in English you had a pretty good chance that someone of importance would be listening to it somewhere — maybe not where you thought it was, but somewhere. (Whereas if you broadcast in Albanian you'd be limiting yourself. Although one of the most avid listeners to our Cantonese program was a doctor in Addis Ababa.) So I felt that English was very important, and it wasn't long before we came on the concept of — I first thought of Basic English and then that was changed to Special English, which I think, looking back, is one of the most important innovations that we made. I can tell you from all the listening I did in all my travels that I could understand Special English better than the regular English program. It's perfectly obvious, because you - are - speaking - slowly. Which means you have more milliseconds for your voice so that a failure of half a millisecond is less important in understanding. It took great skill to train the announcers to do it. I think we got up to a thousand words in the vocabulary, and we were able to print the word books and have them in the USIS libraries. There's no issue: if you could only broadcast in one language, it would be English. It's our language, and you can get better programming in English because you can get Senator so-and-so, and you can get the President and other individuals speaking, which you can't do in the other languages.

Q: There were a number of other innovations in English programs while you were director, including what some referred to as a University of the Air — that is, the Forum program.

LOOMIS: Ted Wertime was really responsible for Forum, and again I brought him over from the intelligence community. He was a very able guy. A lot of these things happened on my watch but I probably did not have the first idea.

Q: What led to the change of the Munich Radio Center to a “Program” Center in 1958?

LOOMIS: It was clearly necessary to do because D'Alessandro and the head of RFE, whose name escapes me, were at each other's throats. It was a terribly disruptive thing. You had all kinds of problems. They were trying to steal each other's guys. “And that guy doesn't know what he's doing, it's just a bunch of commies over there.” Part of it was substance, but a lot of it was personal. And then of course you had a lot of problems between the Munich and Washington parts of the Voice, so the whole thing was a disaster. The Munich VOA operation started almost simultaneously with the start of RFE, and I think we were still kind of dreaming of rolling back the Curtain. I'm not sure of this, but I think it was very similar to the thinking that led to RFE. The people who were there certainly felt that way, which was one of the problems. They were fighting with RFE, which was trying to do the same thing, and they were fighting with the Washington people who “didn't understand the Hungarians.” It just plain wasn't necessary. That decision was made before I came to the Voice, but I visited both operations in Munich and Radio Liberty too.

Q: One of your chief legacies was the VOA Charter. How did that come to be?

LOOMIS: Like any of these things, there were many authors. Sandy Marlowe wrote the first draft, as I recall, something like 20 pages. It had the concepts. A number of people worked on it, and Jack O'Brien worked on it, to get it down to that one page. It took a lot of work. Every word was scrutinized. Jack took various versions home and spent a day boiling it down; he's a good writer. And the words haven't been changed.

One of the reasons I wanted a charter was that there were still differences within the Voice, and there were still clearly differences within the Agency, and clearly differences within Congress: Should we be hard-hitting, propagandistic, furthering the interests of the United States? Or were we an overseas CBS, washing all our dirty linen in public? Or what? It depended who you were, or what particular language you were interested in. And I thought it was essential that we have something that was formal, and Allen approved it. I hoped to get it to the NSC, and it was actually discussed at the NSC, but at that point they felt it was inappropriate for the NSC to give a public directive to a department. It didn't

seem to make much sense, but there it was. I was very sorry. It came out as a Directive from Allen. I felt when it was first written and promulgated, it was just a piece of paper, just like the Magna Carta was, but that over a period of time, if we were able to stick to it, or at least keep trying to stick to it, it would get an importance and a stability and a uniformity that you couldn't get with changing personnel, from the president on down. And that's what you had to have. And I think it has done that. Like any piece of paper it is bent on occasion, it is not lived up to, but you know you're not living up to it, and you're either being forced to, or for some overriding reason you think there's an exception. I never, in my time, had to NOT live up to it.

Q: A while after the Cuban missile crisis, an instruction was sent to VOA on handling the news — the first and only time in my experience with the Voice that anybody put on paper guidelines to "accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative." What was your reaction to that instruction from Tom Sorensen?

LOOMIS: The real problem is that people in power during a confrontation of any importance are hot and sweaty and tired and angry, and "dammit, this is our radio and it better support me a hundred percent; I don't care about anything else." You can't tell them you're going to ruin it for long-term use, and you're not really helping yourself. They're not in a mood even to hear you. This happens all the time; when you're in a strike situation, you can't get a decent position from the head of the union or from the head of the company, because they're hot, they're putting out propaganda pieces. I think a lot of this was Sorensen. He and I had a constant, constant battle on this. I don't remember the memo from Sorensen you referred to, but I think I would have objected, and maybe I did, to him doing that.

Q: What was your relationship with Ed Murrow and his close associates?

LOOMIS: With Murrow it was very close. We got to know each other personally. I think we felt eye-to-eye on practically every issue. I gathered, though he never said it directly, just

implications and silences, that he was under certain directives, from certain people, that he was uncomfortable with, but that's what it was. I used to have him out here at the farm and we'd go shooting — he was a very keen hunter — and we'd never talk business. The one thing he wanted was to get away from that. So we had a very close relationship. He'd come out with Casey, his son, when he was on vacation, and of course Janet. I don't think many people were aware of that. I did my best not to have it public knowledge. I thought it would just be embarrassing to him.

I'll tell you two other things: one is unimportant, but I think it would indicate that Janet felt that he felt the Voice was effective or competent. That is, when Washington State University dedicated its Murrow Center of Communications Studies, she asked me to give the address. A lot of things turned up that I had surmised, but Fred Friendly was absolutely furious because he had assumed that he was going to be the one to deliver it. Murrow, at least at the time I knew him, was not an admirer of Friendly. They had a separation, but you'd never know it if you listen to Friendly these days. But a thing that I think is of more substance and shows how Ed felt about the Agency, the last time I went to see him, before he went up to Purchase to die — and I knew it was the last time I'd see him, and he knew it was the last time we'd see each other — I used to go there fairly frequently when he was ill, just drop in for a little while — when I came in he looked pretty good and his voice was great and he was pretty alert. He said, I wish I had enough time to write one more piece. I spent 25 years in commercial broadcasting and I have very few real friends. I spent only three years in the Information Agency and I have a number of close friends. Why? We discussed that for two or three minutes, then you could see him fade, and so I said goodbye.

(Interviewer tells the story of “Have You Been Told?”, in which Murrow ordered a rewrite of the original script to make it more dramatic and hard-hitting, only to have the Moscow Embassy report that it would have been better for the Soviet audience to have had it more straightforward and less emotional.)

Well, there was of course the famous one about the Harvest of Shame. I happened to be in his office at the time. It took him a while to change from being private to government, and he just couldn't understand how it was wasting his time and would be embarrassing to him to ask the BBC not to carry it. Several of us had urged him not to.

Q: How did you see the role of the policy offices, uptown and downtown?

LOOMIS: First of all, the function is necessary. Someone has got to find out what the policy is. Often policy was not the policy officer's problem, because frequently it was very difficult to know what U.S. policy was. You couldn't find out. No one would tell you, or they'd tell you conflicting things. Their instinct was not to say anything till you knew what to say. Of course, the radio felt — and I feel — that if there's an important issue the Voice has to say something, because everybody else is saying something. The listener expects something, and if you're going to have any listeners you've got to say something. That was sort of a fundamental problem. Then if you went ahead and did it, they were unhappy because something wasn't right or just that they hadn't told you to do it. One problem with “uptown” was to have them realize that in radio you're talking in minutes, and if you miss that program you miss it for 24 hours.

And then the other problem we always had with them was, they would get a policy directive from State and it would have 16 paragraphs, 16 points. And you'd do a three-minute commentary and have only three of the points in it, and they would scream and yell. You can't put 16 points in a radio program. And then you had the problem of their basically not wanting you to carry something — or being told to tell you; you never knew how much of it was them and how much of it was the people they were receiving orders from — the White House, the State Department, or somebody. I thought Policy, particularly uptown, was more prepared to take guidance from the State Department than they should have been, because it wasn't the State Department, it was an assistant desk officer dealing with Lower Slobovia.

I think the policy (office) of the Voice, by and large, was helpful. They were in a tough spot, because they were caught between the policy people uptown and the broadcasters. I always tried to get the best people for that office because it was such a sensitive position. It is a necessary evil. You have to have it, but there is an inherent dichotomy and there always will be and probably always should be, back and forth. It will be an uneasy relationship, unless one or the other gives in, which would be worse. The policy differences that really got me were the times when they were trying to tell you not to carry news items on a subject — that was a different matter from the other, but I never thought there was any excuse for that. That's what I resigned on. Also, beginning when Rowan came in (Carl Rowan succeeded Ed Murrow as USIA Director), I guess, the pressure from uptown increased. How much of it was Rowan and how much of it was Johnson (President Lyndon Johnson), how much of it was Sorensen, damned if I know, but it increased all the time. The pressure was steadily mounting, and our relationships with Sorensen were not improving. Rowan was mad because I wouldn't bowl with him. I don't bowl, I don't particularly care about bowling, and I live out here [in Middleburg]. It wasn't that I was anti-black or anti-him, it was just that I didn't want to bowl with him. Beginning in '64, it became less fun to be at the Voice, for me. I did my best for that to stop with me and not affect you all (the staff). I was cocky enough to think I could protect the Voice better than anybody else because I'd been there so long. And I knew I had the Voice behind me as a group. I had other relationships around town, and I was in a better position to defend the Voice than any new person coming in — who might have been better after a while but who at the moment wouldn't be. But by '65, I had come to the conclusion that my staying there was damaging to the Voice. If I said, “This paper is white,” they'd say, “No, it's black.” They were so mad at me, and I was getting so mad at them. The final blow-up just happened to be the Cambodian thing.

So I said, “Well, I'm not doing any good here.” Frank Keppel, the new Commissioner of Education, whom I'd known slightly, had been after me a year before and I'd turned him down, asked me again, and so I said, “All right, Frank.” He said, “We've really got to

change things here. We're getting a billion and a half dollars this year, and I've got to get this place organized." So I said, "Okay," and resigned, and it was in the newspapers that I'd resigned. On Saturday, Frank got a call from Johnson telling him not to hire me. Keppel said, "Well, Mr. President, you'll have two jobs to fill." I didn't know this at the time, only heard about it later. Johnson backed down. Both of us were out a year later.

Q: Were there difficulties in VOA's coverage of the civil rights movement and the strife that went with it?

LOOMIS: Civil rights was never a problem. We never had a problem with anything domestic, because there was no one to give policy. Strikes, all that sort of stuff, we never had a problem, because there wasn't a State Department or there wasn't a desk officer involved. And we knew as much about it as anybody else did, probably more.

Q: One of the more interesting aspects of your so-called management style was the famous "pajama parties." How did you happen to start those sessions?

LOOMIS: I guess I learned that habit (PJ parties) from my father, who had used that device. He'd have people come for a weekend or a night, and he would have very productive meetings. At one point he was very much involved in science, and he would have two or three Nobel Prize winners at the house for a weekend, not a garden party, but just really talking. The fact that it was a home and not a conference room, and that you'd break and have cocktails and continue the conversation, the wives would be there, and you'd go back to the room, it was a very productive device. This was a variant on the theme, because the house was here, the family was away, particularly in the summer, so I had bedrooms, and we're far enough out that people don't want to go back in (to Washington) afterwards. I thought it was very useful, and I've done that all along, wherever I've (worked). You create personal relations in a different way.

And I also used the technique of having lunches — and not short lunches — with people, and I don't know why but if you break bread with someone, just the two of you, you have a

different relationship than if you sit down and talk for an hour and a half. So I used lunches as an asset, and I planned them rather carefully. I've got five of them this week, or maybe four. What order do I want them in? Whom do I want? I'd have lunches in my office with the members of the language desks, and with the policy staff. And we had working lunches in the conference room, usually to deal with administrative matters, sometimes policy. It was the only time you'd get the engineers and the programmers and the administrative people and the special assistant together, and that was worth while.

Q: During your tenure VOA really began to develop its corps of overseas correspondents, which inevitably led to differences between the Voice and some ambassadors and even PAO's. How did you resolve these differences?

LOOMIS: Well, I could see both sides of that, and I thought on some occasions the Ambassador was wrong and on other occasions I thought our correspondent was wrong. It depended on the individual circumstances. Some of our correspondents wanted it both ways. They wanted to have access to the classified information, they wanted to have the special introductions, they wanted to have the physical protection, they wanted all kinds of things, but then, thank you very much, and they could go write as if they were someone else. But some of the ambassadors were wrong because if you said anything that might indicate they weren't doing a perfect job or that there was something wrong in the relationship between our countries, they'd blow their stack. I felt that the guy was a U.S. Government employee, and there was no pretending he wasn't, and that that required him to be more circumspect and more careful at what he was doing. But the editorial judgment or review should be done by the Voice in Washington and not by the staff of the Ambassador. If the ambassador thought it was wrong, fine, we'd like to get that bit of information. And sometimes the ambassador was right, and our guy hadn't done the right job. Of course the important thing is to get a view of what's going on better than you could pick up in the coffee shop.

Q: I have heard that, early in your time at VOA, you instituted a training project for improving language staffers' English. What was the basis of that?

LOOMIS: You had to watch translations from Central Services' materials like a hawk. I used to talk to the monitors, and you would pick up a series of things that at least that individual monitor thought was off the reservation. Then I would talk to the language service head. Sometimes I found out about it traveling overseas, from the local staffs of the embassies. Translation is such a tricky thing, especially of political materials. When a desk is divided, someone says, “It was done by that guy over there,” which was no good, and the other guy says, “The one you did was no good.” You try to sort it out as best you can. That may have been Barry's idea, I don't remember it as my idea, though I may have decided the only way I can do it is send them to school. Maybe Ruth Walter did this, she was training officer. I certainly didn't conceive of the idea. Of course, Ruth was right in my office, so that's probably how it developed.

Q: What do you see as the impact of the new communications technologies on the need for short-wave broadcasting in the world?

LOOMIS: For most of the world, short-wave will be needed for a long time. While locally placed television is highly desirable because of better reception, they require the approval of the distributor, and when the chips are down, or in any of your dictatorships of the right or left, you won't get permission. And that's when short-wave radio is the only thing there is, unless you're lucky enough to have a medium-wave in a nearby country broadcasting in. But even then it's a problem because the host country is concerned not to make the other people unhappy. I think, on the other hand, that television program they have now, in which foreign correspondents in their cities ask questions of U.S. officials here, is first class. That's exactly what should be done. They're doing it, and they will push it to distribute it, and it will have credibility.

While talking about technology, I'd like to put a word in here about what the Voice is doing now in engineering. I am very pleased. Nothing has happened for twenty years, basically. There have been a series of technical developments that permit better transmission, in signal processing and antenna design. The Voice has the money now; it's gone to the right places to get advice; it's got a major job it's handling, I think, very well. They've gotten much more political support to get overseas relay stations than I was ever able to get. And I think you can say that's one of the major advantages of Mr. Wick being in the Agency. It was interesting that they've been able to get Israel, because we thought about Israel, we raised it, but the State Department collapsed in an absolute tremor, and said “Absolutely no!” It's interesting that they're doing it; I'm not sure whether it's wise or not. The report of the National Research Council commented that VOA engineering over the last twelve years had atrophied.

Q: In 1975, the Stanton Commission recommended that the various functions of the Agency be separated and farmed out to different parts of the government: policy-supportive activities to the State Department itself; cultural and. educational exchange operations into an AID-like organization; and an independent VOA. You opposed that proposal at the time. Have you had any reason to change your mind?

LOOMIS: I still feel the way I did then (in 1975). I think that what you're talking about is what is likely to be, over the long term, the most effective shield between the Voice and the President, the Secretary of State, and anybody else who wants to jimmy the output, one way or another. We keep thinking that the BBC is great. Well, the BBC is great because the overseas service of the BBC is under the umbrella of the domestic service. Even then they're having problems that we're well aware of. Like the president has to be very careful before he tangles with CBS and NBC and ABC, he doesn't hesitate for a second to tangle with the poor little old Voice. Just, “Dammit, employee, do it!” Now if you had a board that was meant to defend you, I think you would have difficulty getting able people over a long term, because it would be an unsatisfactory job, you'd only have something

to do when there was an unpleasantness that you were meant to try to solve. The BIB is different, because it's over there in other languages and no one knows what they're doing anyway, nobody listens to it. It's really quite a different thing. I think you have a much better chance of having able people over the long term, and an organization, a department rather than a board to defend you from the powers that be. I think that the Voice has the best situation now. It is semi-independent, so it is treated differently, it has to be treated differently. Everybody recognizes that. And yet if you have a strong and able director you've got a helluva good defense. George Allen was first class. If you have a bum director you're lousy. But if you have a bum board, you're lousy. And you have a better chance over the years of having a bum board than you do of having a bum director. I look at it as insulation. That's the only important thing. But it also gives you what I mentioned before, the flywheel on budgets: years you're popular you give a little bit to the Agency, and years when somebody else is popular you get a little back.

But I think clearly the most important point is the shield. And in view of my experience with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, I feel even stronger that way than I did before. George Allen asked me this way, way back, when I was head of the Voice, whether I wanted to be independent, and I said, “Well, let me think on it,” and I was sure I would, I thought I was going to come out for independence, but the more I thought about it the more I convinced myself that it was wrong. That was '58 or '59 that George and I were discussing it. I did a paper for him, two pages or so, on why I felt that way.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting was an interesting thing, because you had a corporation that was in theory private but the board is appointed by the President with the consent of the Senate, which is not normal in private affairs. When I was there there were 15, no more than seven could belong to any one political party, six-year terms, a third of the members changed every two years. It was as balanced as could be on paper. The first board, that was appointed by Johnson, were first class. Doug Cater was the staff guy, it was a new thing and it had a lot of momentum, and everybody was looking at it, and it was great. You got very, very able people. The second group came in three years

later, and some of the new people weren't as good, and it gradually went down. And now it's an absolute scandal; there's no one of any competence there at all. You couldn't get somebody accomplished to be on it now. The charge is to the board, the federal money all comes to them, and what they do with it is an absolute shambles. That is the clearest example that over a period of time a presidentially-appointed board is a disaster. Unless it's a very important thing that really has the attention of the president. Otherwise you become third or fourth class — the patronage-seeker and the ideologue are the only two kinds of people who want to get on your board. I can see the Voice's board having something like that, and it would be a disaster.

Q: There was a story that went around the Voice about your running into an African listener on one of your safaris. Would you tell me about it?

LOOMIS: This was in Tanganyika, fairly close to the end of the world. I was on safari, and we came to a river, and the only way to cross the river was on a barge, pulled across by a wire. We had several lorries and rovers, so it took a while to do that. I happened to go across on the first one, and got on the other side, and it was dry and hot. There was a mango tree there, with half a dozen guys lying down in the shade. The guy next to me said something in Swahili, and I said, “I'm sorry, I don't speak Swahili,” and he said, “Oh, that's quite all right, I speak English.” He had on a torn shirt, shorts, barefoot, covered with dust. So we talked a little bit about where the elephants were and we talked about the lack of rain. So then he said, “By the way, old chap, why did you people send a rocket to the moon?” With luck, I'd been able to get the VOA that morning, and I knew it had happened. So I murmured something about science, and then asked, “How did you know about it?” He said, “I was listening to the American radio this morning.” I almost grabbed him — live audience right there. I asked him about his listening, and he listened to Moscow, to the BBC, to us, to Dar es Salaam, of course, his own station, he listened to Brazzaville for the music, and to Uganda and maybe some others. Of course, what else did he do? He didn't have movies to go to, he didn't have a car to go visit Aunt Susie with. He had nothing else to do. We took him to his hut, which was three or four miles down the road, a

typical little wattle hut, but with a wire coming out and strung up a tree. I had probably the toughest political conversation I've had with anybody. He said, “I was listening to Moscow the other day, and they said they had 423,000 tons of steel a year, and you only had so many. Is that true?” Well, he had me. He noted that we would say diametrically opposite things, we and Moscow. And it was perfectly clear to me that he listened to everybody he could physically hear — and understand the language; that he didn't trust any of them; he didn't distrust any of them; he was weighing and listening and checking and noticing differences and then trying to find out. He became the person that I was broadcasting to. Whenever I had to come to a decision, when I was asked about this script, or should we do this or do that, I would think, “Now, how would it go to him?” He was the local head of TANU, the Tanganyika African National Union, which became the government, so he was clearly the most important person politically in that desolate area. How important was that? Well, you never knew. He may have gone to Dar es Salaam, he may be the ambassador to wherever; you don't know where he is. Typical example of a guy who hadn't had much formal schooling — he could read, but he didn't have much to read; it was the radio that he was listening to.

I was reading this study that the research people had done for the Voice on the transmitters, and they were saying the trouble with these receivers is, the experts they've talked to in the Third World say that batteries are hard to get and so people are not likely to have receivers. I remember once in Kano, Nigeria — I was always moseying around, I always went into radio stores just to see what was available and so forth. It was run by Indians, as they all are in that part of the world. And this tall African walked in, all covered with dust, with this great big radio sitting on top of his head. He needed batteries and he needed a vacuum tube. I asked the guy where the fellow was from, and he said a name that didn't mean any thing to me, and I asked how far it was, and he said, “Oh, that's probably 20, 25 miles.” He had walked all the way. He wanted that radio enough that he had walked 25 miles to get a battery and a vacuum tube. Now, that's the guy who will listen to you.

And this other report, that I really disagree with, says you can get some solar energy stuff and we can give it to them. And you know the ratholes where we've given away radios. That's just the worst thing you can ever do. When there's no other communications, no written communications or anything else, the radio is the only connection to your own country, much less the outside world. And this guy may or may not have listened to us, but that was immaterial. The thing is, the radio was important to him.

Q: Tell me about some of the ups and downs of VOA's experience with jamming.

LOOMIS: One of the interesting things was the period of content jamming, and the deal we made for reducing the power of 173, the Munich long-wave transmitter. This started, back and forth, at the ITU meetings. George Jacobs is a very able fellow, a subtle politician, and he got to be pretty friendly with his Russian opposite number. And they used to sort of jokingly say, back and forth: The damn jamming's costing you more than it's worth to you; isn't there any way to stop it? Yes, but that damn megawatt you have on our frequency — that's terrible; no one can hear you, but it doesn't hurt us. And so on. So over a period of years it came out that perhaps we could make a trade. They reduced the jamming, and we reduced the power of the long-wave station proportionately. A couple of times they'd go back up, and we'd go back up, too. Verification was easy, you could hear the difference. And we could adjust within a reasonable time. Not that day. And as they used less time, they used that time more selectively, on individual items in the news. Which gave us a rather interesting analysis of their control mechanism and how god dam good it was. Obviously they had to have a clear frequency on which to listen, and then the first thing they heard about something Russian they'd start, and then, go back to something horrible about blacks in America, it would be clear as a bell. It was very interesting to see that, and we prepared charts of this for policy guidance since you could see perfectly well what it was they wanted to black out. It was a rather useful device for a period of time.

When I was deputy director, I was in Moscow, and one of the things that I'd hoped to accomplish was to have a discussion on the subject of jamming. This must have been '70

or so. We had some kind of exhibit, but anyhow I arrived. We got word that Mr. Zamyatin and some other people wanted to see me at four or five that afternoon. I went with the PAO, who spoke Russian, and the DCM, who spoke Russian. And it was perfectly clear that they all spoke English, so that I was the only one who wasn't bilingual. But we went through with the mechanism of translating, which of course gave them a chance to prepare their replies while I had to wait to find out what the hell they were saying. So we had our little discussion on jamming, the obvious things. I thought that was it and almost started to get up, when Zamyatin took off and said how awful President Nixon was, how he was ruining the relations between our two countries, whereas President Kennedy was a great president. I didn't reply to the Nixon part, but I replied to the Kennedy part. I said I agreed that Kennedy was a great president, a great man. He had one great advantage, too; he was Irish, and the Irish are lucky, and he was lucky that there was a break in the clouds over Cuba. Silence for a moment. And then they were very cheerful, and invited me to the Bolshoi. The next night I was getting the train to Warsaw, and my God, they came to the train, they had caviar, they had the whole bloody works. The poor deputy ambassador, when I said that, he almost collapsed.

1956: VOA And Handling Of Hungarian Uprising

Q: There have been charges that VOA helped incite and encourage the Hungarian uprising. But that was before your time there.

LOOMIS: At the time of the Hungarian revolution I was in the Agency's research office. We had the problem of trying to find out what had triggered the uprising, and how important was radio, and had the Voice gone off the track. As you know, there was a major exodus from Hungary, something like twenty or twenty-five percent of the population. As soon as we saw that was happening, Leo Crespi, who was the head of our polling and a very able guy, set up a polling operation in Vienna. For the first time, we had statistically significant numbers of people of all walks of life. It was clear that the West and the radio were significant, but not dominant. Internal problems were the first two or three or four,

the radios were then sort of next, or the West in general. They did feel that some of the commentators on Radio Free Europe had taken personal positions, to some degree, but that was not decisive. They had listened to, and were probably at least subconsciously influenced by, things they'd heard on the Voice — when they were official. When it was Cabot Lodge speaking at the United Nations, which we carried, and when the President said this or that, that did have an impact, but that was clearly what the Voice had to do and should have done. You can argue whether Cabot Lodge should have said what he did, or argue whether the President should have said what he did, but that the Voice had no choice, and that it was attributed and it was not the only thing in the headlines, it was carried. The Voice and BBC, and western radio in general, were very important to the Hungarians to know that the West knew and cared, after they were in the fighting part of it. It was not so important when they started, but when they were fighting, to know what was happening, to know the Russians had come in, to know what was going on. Western radios were important, and they felt they were by and large as accurate as you could be when there was total chaos. The point was that they were doing it for their own reasons, they weren't being told to do it by a bunch of #migr#s. I can remember the list, and there were three or four or five things that were more important to the starting of it. Then came Western radios and other Western influences. So it certainly wasn't dominant or principal or controlling or any of those words. It was contributory to a degree, and I'm sure it differed with different individuals.

Q: When you became deputy director of the Agency, you still had a supervisory role to play with regard to the Voice. How did you feel about that job?

LOOMIS: The job was nowhere near as much fun, as I knew it wouldn't be, as being Director of the Voice. As Director of the Voice, you felt you were closer to where things were physically happening. While I couldn't write a script, I could read yours and discuss it with you and have some understanding and concept of it. Up there, I'd have to talk to the Director of the Voice who'd talk to you, that sort of stuff. The main thing was that I had a very good relationship with Frank Shakespeare. I respected him mightily. We were very

different, and our differences complemented each other. He should have been in the State Department; he was a real policy guy. He went and visited the Gulf when no one thought there was any importance to the Gulf at all. So when it came up, he'd talked to the Emir of so-and-so. He was a real able guy, and we respected each other. He wanted me to run the Agency on a day-to-day basis, which was fine, but I told him I had to travel because I had to know what was going on overseas. So we agreed that he would be overseas about a third of the time, and I'd be overseas about a third of the time and we'd be together about a third of the time. And that's about the way it worked out. It was a good relationship. I just tried to give Giddens what I had wished to have as far as freedom was concerned.

Q: Do you recall any major differences between VOA and the Agency while you were the deputy director?

LOOMIS: Nothing of significance. There were always the budget problems. The Voice seemed to have an innate capacity to use more money than they had. And we were sort of separate from the Agency, being downtown, and all the rest. And a lot of that was that we were the only part of the Agency in direct contact with the audience. That's inherent in the job. One of the things I tried to do as deputy was get more cross refs between different branches of the Agency, so that they would use us and we would use them. There are a number of places where that can be done. And when I was there they were doing some of that, with a language broadcast saying that there's a special show on such-and-such at the USIS library.

Q: At the time the FAS personnel system was instituted, when you were deputy director of the Agency, every supervisory position in the Voice of America was designated foreign service-

LOOMIS: Except the job I occupied, because Bill Miller said there had to be a point of continuity in the program office. The ceiling that this put on the VOA professionals seriously affected their morale and their self-esteem. What is your view of the role of

the Foreign Service in the Voice? As you know, I was pushing the integration — not integration, but back and forth assignments. I think that is a good idea, and I think that a Foreign Service officer ought to be able to be eligible for any Agency assignment. I think that's one of the main advantages of being in the Information Agency. I have had discussions about that with some of my friends in the BBC, and one of the advantages that they see in our system is that it is easier to get assignments overseas for periods of time and people coming back and interchanging, while it is very difficult if not impossible for them to exchange with their British Information Service colleagues. They consider this an advantage of the Voice's arrangement.

Q: In looking back, how do you feel about the Voice and your time there?

LOOMIS: Well, I think the seven years I was there was one of the most productive and happiest (periods) of my life. I achieved most of the things I wanted to do. I think I started down the path — you never reach the goal. The engineering, for example, was nowhere near completed when I left, but the ball was rolling, we had the money, we knew where we were going.

On programming, as I said, the last two years I was getting more and more unhappy because of pressure. But that wasn't with the Voice, it was uptown. In lots of ways I felt terrible leaving the Voice, because I felt all those people who had been so good and so true were going to be massacred in one way or another. But I knew it was inevitable, it wasn't going to last, and I thought I was doing more harm to the Voice than good. I wasn't particularly frustrated by a lack of funds, in the sense that we never had enough or got all we wanted, but that's the world. I certainly thought I got a fair shake. I certainly got a fair shake out of what the Agency got. By and large, in view of what was happening to the other parts of government, I didn't feel put upon.

Q: Thank you very much, Henry.

End of interview